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# Inside Information

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of Agriculture  
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## COSDA SCHEDULES ANNUAL MEETING

The Communication Officers of State Departments of Agriculture will hold their annual meeting Oct. 17-19 at Harrisburg, Pa., according to COSDA president John Nikoloff, who also is Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's press secretary.

"The meeting will be based in the Holiday Inn of Harrisburg, and promises a lot of information, a little learning and hopefully, a chance to share our latest experiences," says Nikoloff.

He says attendees can expect a solid show-and-tell session, some thoughts on what is missing in agricultural public relations and additional background on the future of telecommunications in agricultural public information.

Details of the agenda, hotel registration cards, etc. are being sent to COSDA members. Others interested in attending the COSDA meeting may contact Nikoloff, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110, or call him at (717) 787-5085.

## EPA JOINS DIALCOM NETWORK

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has contracted with Dialcom Incorporated to provide electronic mail service between the headquarters office in Washington, D.C., and all of the agency's field offices (up to as many as 1,000 electronic mailboxes).

Thus, EPA joins USDA, FDA (Food & Drug Administration of the U.S. Health & Human Resources Department), U.S. House of Representatives, land grant universities and a sprinkling of other federal and state agencies in having electronic access to each other through the same computerized system.

There are also reports that plans are afoot to link the White House and all the Cabinet secretaries via the Dialcom system.

## PERSONAL COMPUTING SOMETIMES IMPERSONAL

Article in October issue of PERSONAL COMPUTING magazine points out that the old adage, "shoemaker's children are the ones who have no shoes," is being updated in the personal computer industry.

The line is drawn when the institution, not the person, makes the decision to compute. Even personal computer manufacturers admit that their own computing is not all that personal.

And, as a side bar, the senior editor of PERSONAL COMPUTING magazine admitted that his own magazine "doesn't deserve any kudos for leading the new wave in computing either."

"If I hadn't bought this personal computer myself, this story would likely have been done on a typewriter," the senior editor said.

The article sums up that personal computer companies "sadly, often institutionalize the computing. Then the company proudly tells the world about it.

"Each says it has no more typewriters. Each considers its products to be productivity tools, and then says its employees use the computers in that fashion.

"Some of the shoemaker's children do, But some have no shoes."

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## COMPUTERS PROVIDE COMMUNICATING POWER

All those blessed with the ability to communicate well should be applauding the computer age. Never before has so much power been given to communicators.

So says Don Bagin, publisher of COMMUNICATION BRIEFINGS newsletter.

Why then do so many communicators shun the opportunities that computers provide?

Bagin suspects that two human factors enter into the equation.

First, many management people--especially those who have reached the higher levels--are accustomed to having others agree with them. And it's just plain frustrating to have a computer inform them that they have issued "an illegal command."

And second, there's the fear of being labeled incompetent if one fails to master the intricacies of a computer right off, Bagin says.

Communicators and managers should realize that they can use the computer to become more effective in their jobs without learning how to program it, just as they can enjoy viewing a TV show without being able to write a script.

"We feel that everyone responsible for collecting or disseminating information should know about the potential impact the computer can have in his or her field," Bagin says.

"It would be foolhardy--possibly even job threatening--to close our eyes to the advances of the computer age."

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## USDA INFORMATION INTERN GETS POSITION

Karen McCready, cooperative education information intern in the USDA regional information office in Chicago, has landed a reporter's position with the Commodity News Service bureau in Chicago.

McCready, recent journalism graduate from Michigan State University, served two terms under the intern program with the regional information office of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. "Another fine intern placed in a good position," says Herb Jackson, regional information director.

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# USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL SPEEDS MESSAGES

A quick review of two reports sent by Dialcom electronic mail to large distribution lists recently show that most receivers are pulling their messages within a few hours after dispatch, some even within a few short minutes.

Receipt of the inaugural issue of the electronically-mailed USDA Extension Service Administrator's weekly "Current Developments" was acknowledged by 24 state Extension Directors and Administrators of 1890 institutions within two hours of the early morning dispatch.

By 5 p.m. that same day, a total of 32 locations had acknowledged receipt. An additional 17 picked up the report from their electronic mailbox the following workday.

Only 7 offices took more than 48 hours to access their mailbox and pull the Extension Administrator's memorandum.

A check of the Sept. 20 issue of INSIDE INFORMATION shows that 13 receivers had acknowledged receipt within one hour of the 8 a.m. (EDT) dispatch via electronic mail.

Within two hours, 23 had received it and by the end of the day of issuance, 55 had received INSIDE.

Another 11 receivers pulled the information newsletter from their electronic mailboxes the next day, and only 4 offices delayed until the third day to "read" the issue.

The five fastest electronic mail readers of INSIDE INFORMATION were: USDA Farmers Home Administration information office, 13 minutes after dispatch; Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services information office, 16 minutes; USDA Agricultural Marketing Service information office, 17 minutes; University of Pennsylvania agricultural communications office, 28 minutes; and Illinois Department of Agriculture information office, 38 minutes.

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## WHERE GEORGIA FARMERS GET THEIR INFO

County Extension Service agents and the farm press are the major sources of information for Georgia farmers, according to a recent survey conducted by Tom Hallman, extension news editor, University of Georgia.

In a survey of 300 Georgia farmers, and in response to the question where they go to get their information, 82 percent of those replying said from the county extension agent, while 81 percent also listed the farm press.

Other farmers were the source of information for 46 percent of the sample. Local newspapers were the source in 14 percent of the cases.

Radio stations and cooperatives each were listed as a source for 11 percent of the Georgia farmers, and television only 9 percent.

The best time to catch farmers listening to the radio is between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. (73 percent) and between 7 and 9 p.m. (67 percent).

Anyone wanting more details of the survey should contact Hallman, Extension Communications Department, College of Agriculture, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, or call (404) 542-2561.

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## "AG IN CLASSROOM" PROJECT GETS BOOST

EDUCATION DAILY, the major trade newspaper in education circles, ran an article Aug. 3 about the "Agriculture in the Classroom" program.

Because of that article and others like it, the Special Programs Center in USDA's Office of Governmental & Public Affairs is getting 5 to 10 calls daily for more information about the information/education project.

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## U.S. CUSTOMS WARNS ABOUT COMPUTERS

The U.S. Customs Service cautions international travelers that counterfeit Apple II personal computers and related materials which violate recorded copy-rights and or trademarks of Apple Computer, Inc., are subject to seizure if brought into the United States.

Customs agents have been seizing prohibited copies of these computers, with foreign values varying from \$100 to \$450 each, and accompanying software which have been entering the United States at several West Coast locations and in Hawaii.

All suspect units are identical in size and appearance to genuine Apple II computers, are normally tan in color, and possibly branded APPLE II, ORANGE, APOLO II, GOLDEN, PET TK 1000, AP II or come with no brand name reflected.

Customs notes that these illegal copies could possibly interfere with local television and radio broadcasts because they were not built to FCC specifications.

"If you are thinking about buying a low-priced personal computer and related equipment while overseas, think twice; the money you save might be your own!" says the Customs Service announcement.

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## AG COMMUNICATORS ELECTRONIC LIST UPDATED

The listing of agricultural communicators on the Dialcom electronic mail network will be updated Oct. 1, the first revision since it was updated Aug. 1.

Any corrections should be forwarded to Nancy Bevis--AGR001--or call (202) 447-7454 before the end of the day Sept. 30.

Anyone not on the network but who wishes to get a printed copy of the listing also may get in touch with her.

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## QUOTE OF THE MONTH....

"The strongest drive is not love, or hate. It is one person's need to change another's copy." --COMMUNICATIONS BRIEFINGS newsletter.

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## MISSING THE PINK?

The "pink sheet" has been very pale the last three issues. The reason for INSIDE INFORMATION being printed on white paper instead of the traditional and time-honored pink is that the print shop just plain ran out of the pink kind.

Who knows? Maybe we'll keep the white....or would you rather we stick with pink? What do the "printed copy" readers want? Let's hear from you. --THE EDITOR

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INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, State Departments of Agriculture and Land Grant Universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to Stan W. Prochaska, Assistant Public Affairs Director, Room 402-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, to AGR002 on the Dialcom electronic mail system, or call (202) 447-7454.